



BRIEFING: FEBRUARY 2013 BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM #3

TO: California High-Speed Rail Board of Directors

FROM: Matthew Robinson, Deputy Director of Legislation

DATE: February 14, 2013

RE: Draft California State Rail Plan

Summary

The Draft California State Rail Plan (State Rail Plan) prepared by Caltrans will be available for public comment from February 8 to March 11, 2013. As the State Rail Plan will guide federal and state rail investments, California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) staff worked with Caltrans to incorporate the high-speed rail project and statewide rail modernization program into the State Rail Plan.

Background

Development of a state rail plan is a federal and state requirement. According to the federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA), states must develop state rail plans meeting federal requirements to be eligible for federal funding for high-speed and intercity passenger rail programs. State law requires that Caltrans prepare a state rail plan that includes passenger and freight rail. The final State Rail Plan will be submitted to the California Transportation Commission for advice and consent and then to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

The 2013 State Rail Plan will be the first to recognize the future high-speed rail system and its integration with existing and proposed conventional rail systems. Within its 10 chapters, the State Rail Plan establishes a statewide vision, sets priorities, and develops implementation strategies to enhance passenger and freight rail service in the public interest. It promotes the State's goal of an integrated, multimodal transportation network.

To develop the State Rail Plan Caltrans formed an advisory committee of federal, state, and regional agencies and rail stakeholders to guide document development and provide advice on its content. Authority staff participated on the advisory committee ensuring that the high-speed rail program discussed in the State Rail Plan is consistent with the 2012 Business Plan.

The State Rail Plan discusses the high-speed rail program's phased implementation strategy, blended approach to integrating high-speed rail with urban, commuter, and intercity rail systems, and planning efforts with rail partners to coordinate infrastructure investments resulting in a statewide rail modernization program. Also included in the State Rail Plan are the costs associated with each of the phases, as well as the detailed costs for the Initial Operating Section, which runs from Merced to the San Fernando Valley. These cost estimates will guide future federal and state investment in the high-speed rail project.

The State Rail Plan describes existing and future intercity and commuter rail services. The description includes planned capital investments for each service. Many of the planned capital investments result from the Authority's partnership with providers of these services to develop Bookend (the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles Basin) and connectivity projects.

In February, Caltrans will host five open house meetings and a webinar where the public may learn of and comment on the State Rail Plan. The meetings will occur in Sacramento, Oakland, San Diego, Los Angeles and Fresno. The Authority plans to participate in these meeting to provide information on the high-speed rail program and its role in development of the State Rail Plan. The Regional Directors Diana Gomez, Ben Tripousis, and Michelle Boehm will attend the open house in their respective areas. Deputy Director of Legislation Matthew Robinson and Deputy Program Director of Planning Gregg Albright Program will attend the webinar.

Issue

As stated above, Authority staff provided input to the State Rail Plan. Caltrans and Authority staff have met and conferred on Authority comments to the administrative draft of the document. We anticipate that Caltrans will accept our comments.

The FRA has also been very involved in the development of the State Rail Plan. The FRA has communicated to Caltrans and the Authority that is it important for the State Rail Plan to present a well-planned, integrated passenger rail network that identifies needs and an implementation strategy.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board authorize the CEO to pen a letter to Caltrans in support of the State Rail Plan. This letter would include any comments the Board has on the plan as well as any recommendations they may wish to make. The Board will also authorize Authority staff to add additional comments to this letter.